



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

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APRIL 26, 2004

CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
MARVIN SMILON, HERBERT HADAD  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE  
(212) 637-2600

**78 CHARGED IN UNITED STATES, COLOMBIA  
AND NETHERLANDS ANTILLES IN INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONSPIRACY**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, ANTHONY PLACIDO, the Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Office, and JEROME M. HARRIS, the Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Caribbean Division, announced today the unsealing in Manhattan federal court of Indictments charging 15 people in the United States, Colombia, and Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, with participating in two separate international conspiracies to import heroin and cocaine into the United States from Colombia via, among other places, the Caribbean Island of Curacao, Netherlands Antilles.

The arrests were the culmination of Operations Encore and Barehak, two related investigations involving the transport of massive amounts of narcotics that were manufactured in Colombia and imported to the United States through various means, including by transshipment through Curacao, Netherlands Antilles. The unsealing of the two Indictments follows the arrests over the

weekend in the United States, Colombia and Curacao of approximately 30 defendants.

According to law enforcement officials, these cases are the result of unprecedented international cooperation between the Netherlands Antilles, Colombia and the United States, and represent the first joint investigations and prosecutions of large-scale narcotics trafficking organizations operating in these three countries. The coordinated efforts included simultaneous telephone intercepts in all three countries, permitting law enforcement to root out all aspects of the organizations - from the sources of supply in Colombia, to the transshippers in Curacao, to the wholesale importers and distributors in the United States.

During the course of these coordinated investigations, approximately 4,438 kilograms of cocaine, 34 kilograms of heroin, 15 kilograms of methamphetamine, 484 kilograms of marijuana, \$180,000 in United States currency, 21 firearms, 7 vessels and 2 businesses have been seized, and the United States is seeking \$43 million in asset forfeiture from the defendants.

### **The Valencia Indictment**

The United States Indictment that has arisen out of Operation Barehak charges six defendants, all of whom were recently arrested in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles. According to

the Indictment, JAMES YEZID VALENCIA RUGELES the defendant, along with his two sons, MARIO ALBERTO VALENCIA, and JAMES JESUS VALENCIA MUNEVAR, ran a massive cocaine smuggling organization (the "Valencia Organization") which received tons of cocaine in Curacao, which they then transported northward, to St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles, before eventual importation into Puerto Rico and the continental United States.

According to the Valencia Indictment, the Valencia Organization received its cocaine after it traveled, by container ship and high-speed motorboat, from the northern coasts of Venezuela and Colombia (the northern coast of Venezuela is approximately 24 nautical miles south of Curacao). The Valencia Indictment further stated that in order to successfully import narcotics into Curacao, the Valencia Organization paid corrupt law enforcement officials to provide security for the Valencia Organization, including serving as look-outs in Curacao when a shipment of cocaine was scheduled to arrive and providing information to the Valencia Organization about law enforcement's interdiction efforts so that the Valencia Organization could avoid detection and interception of the loads of narcotics. Two of the arrested defendants who are being prosecuted in Curacao were local police officers who provided such services to the Valencia Organization. According to the Valencia Indictment,

after the cocaine arrived in Curacao, the Valencia Organization arranged for its shipment to St. Maarten, where it was stored until it was eventually shipped to Puerto Rico and the continental United States.

Payment for the cocaine would be received in United States currency which was transported back to Curacao by, among other means, human couriers. According to the Valencia Indictment, people who failed to pay for the cocaine were subject to threats of physical violence, including threats to the family members of such co-conspirators.

#### **The Diaz-Betancur Indictment**

The United States Indictment that arose from Operation Encore charges 10 defendants, 3 in the United States, 6 in Colombia and 1 in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, with conspiracy to distribute heroin. According to the Diaz-Betancur Indictment and the Requests for Provisional Arrest to Colombia and the Netherlands Antilles, OMAR DIAZ BETANCUR and HERNAN DIAZ BETANCUR, among others, were involved in a large-scale heroin distribution organization based in Colombia that was responsible for importing large quantities of heroin into the United States, including New York, through various routes, including overland over the Mexican border into Texas and by boat through Curacao and the Caribbean.

According to the Diaz-Betancur Indictment, JUAN MARTIN OCAMPO CORTES negotiated heroin transactions with OMAR DIAZ BETANCUR and HERNAN DIAZ BETANCUR, arranged for the smuggling of such narcotics into the United States, and directed wire transfers to be made in payment for the heroin and for expenses relating to the smuggling. More than 19 kilograms of heroin have been seized throughout South America, and more than \$100,000 in United States currency have been seized in connection with Operation Encore.

If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum sentence of life in prison and a \$4 million, or twice the gross gain or loss resulting from the crime.

Mr. KELLEY praised the investigative efforts of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Korps Politie Curacao (KPC), the Recherché Samenwerking Team (RST), the Coast Guard of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba (CGNAA), the Curacao District Attorney's Office, the Colombian National Police, the New York City Police Department and the New York State Police for their unprecedented cooperation and coordination. He said the investigation is continuing.

Assistant United States Attorneys NEIL M. BAROFSKY and KEVIN R. PUVALOWSKI are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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